

them access to goods that were previously virtually unavailable.

Beyond his dedication to improving access for residents of the African community, it is clear that Sheikh Moussa Drammeh has a passion for fostering peace and understanding throughout our communities. Sheikh Drammeh currently serves as the Principal and Founder for the Islamic Leadership School in the Bronx, which remains as the first, and only, Islamic school in The Bronx. This school is also one of only four schools in New York City that established the "Interfaith Living Museum," where Jewish students and Muslim students participate in a yearly cultural exchange curriculum in efforts to promote a global, long term peaceful co-existence. Sheikh Drammeh has also helped establish the Community Peace Patrol Officers, which are a group of community volunteers who have dedicated themselves to patrolling high crime areas in efforts to make them safer and more livable for all residents. This program not only encourages local residents to take an active role in maintaining the safety of local neighborhoods, but also works to foster better relationships between community members and local law enforcement.

Today, Sheikh Drammeh serves as Executive Producer of the African Union Profile and Public Emergency Management Adherence television programs on Bronxnet Television network, and is the founder of Adopt-A-Friend, which is a non-profit organization, dedicated to promoting peace and dialogue among all individuals for a healthy co-existence.

Each of the aforementioned projects and programs speaks to the complete nature of Sheikh Moussa Drammeh's dedication to improving the quality of life for residents throughout The Bronx, as well as his undying commitment to fostering camaraderie and understanding among residents. I am proud to say we have someone like Sheikh Moussa Drammeh living in our community, and am very grateful for all the work he has done, and continues to do to improve our community.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully ask that you and my other distinguished colleagues join me in honoring Sheikh Moussa Drammeh for his consistently remarkable dedication to peace and longstanding commitment to improving our community.

#### LEGISLATIVE HISTORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF VA CLINIC IN AMERICAN SAMOA

#### HON. ENI F.H. FALEOMAVAEGA

OF AMERICAN SAMOA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, November 20, 2014*

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to include, for historical purposes, information about the establishment of the VA clinic in American Samoa.

[Press Release, Nov. 11, 2000]

#### FIRST STEP IN ESTABLISHING A VA MEDICAL CLINIC IN AMERICAN SAMOA IS UNDERWAY

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that a technical team will be in American Samoa from November 13th-17th to set up and test telecom connections for the veterans enrollment plan scheduled for early December.

This is an important moment for our veterans, Congressman Faleomavaega said. And

it is an important moment for American Samoa. Establishing an accurate method for enrolling our veterans is the first step in establishing a VA medical clinic in American Samoa. The purpose of the technical teams visit is to ensure that all systems are go when the VA team arrives to enroll our veterans in early December. Congressman Faleomavaega also explained that the teams visit is part of a collective effort between his office, ASG, and the VA offices in Honolulu and American Samoa.

I want to thank Governor Tauese for his commitment to our veterans. I also want to thank the Governors Special Assistants on Veterans Affairs, High Chief Tuiteleleapaga Fua Ioane, President of the Veterans Advisory Council, and High Talking Chief Paogofie Fiaigoa, Veterans Affairs Officer, Congressman Faleomavaega said. We are working together to ensure that our veterans receive top-notch health care and benefits. We are working together to ensure that every veteran in American Samoa counts and that no one is left behind. We will not be satisfied with the process until every veteran in Samoa is accounted for and enrolled in the system.

I have also been working with Senator Akaka, a senior member of the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs, and Congressman Lane Evans, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Congressman Faleomavaega said. Both gentlemen are fully supportive of our efforts to establish a VA medical clinic with a full-time physician in the Territory. The technical teams planned visit for the week of November 13th is the first step in our collective effort to establish the process that may lead to the construction of our own facility.

Congressman Faleomavaega also noted that Federal law requires an accurate accounting and enrollment of veterans before any consideration can be made to establish a VA medical clinic. It is incumbent upon every veteran living on island to take part in the enrollment process. If we want a clinic with a full-time physician, every veteran must participate. Congressman Faleomavaega said. I strongly urge all veterans on island to participate and enroll when the time comes.

For now, the technical team, headed by Dr. Norman Okamura, will visit Fagatua, Tafuna, Leone and Samoana High Schools to confirm facility arrangements for enrollment activity. According to Congressman Faleomavaega, the team will also confirm the VAs clinical patient record system server configuration and network requirements.

The technical team plans to meet with LBJ and Health Department officials to consider the registration process and to discuss the IHS data system. During this time the team will also be working closely with Johnny Mapu, PTSD Coordinator for the office of Veterans Affairs. Provided all systems are go, the VA enrollment team will arrive in American Samoa during the week of December 4th to begin the enrollment process.

[Press Release, Feb. 14, 2004]

#### CARES COMMISSION AGREES WITH FALEOMAVAEGA; VA CLINIC SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED IN AMERICAN SAMOA

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Commission released its report yesterday and agreed that a Veterans community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) should be established in American Samoa.

The CARES Commission was created by the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide an independent assessment of what the VAs needs may be during the next 20

years. One of the main priorities of the Commission is to make sure that underserved veterans will receive the care they deserve.

On October 1, 2003, I testified before the CARES Commission via live satellite feed from the U.S. House of Representatives to urge the establishment of a VA clinic in American Samoa and to request that our clinic be given the highest priority rating possible, Congressman Faleomavaega said. In my statement, I informed the Commission that I had worked closely with General John Ma, Commanding General of the 9th Regional Support Command, to secure a building at no cost to the VA.

The building that we agreed should be used for a VA clinic is the butler building which is next to our PX. The butler building is 3,600 sq. ft., equipped with telehealth lines, and there are separate entrances and parking lots that can be further segregated if necessary. The U.S. Army Reserve has agreed to reconfigure the building to VA needs and transfer its operations when our new \$20 million U.S. Army Reserve Center is completed by the end of this year.

Mr. David Burge, Director of the Honolulu VA Medical and Regional Office Center (VAMROC) and Dr. Weibe, Director of the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 21 have estimated that construction costs to renovate the building will be approximately \$1 million. The VA and DoD will assume all costs associated with the renovation and, once converted, the clinic will be used to serve Army Reservists as well as our veterans, Congressman Faleomavaega said.

As I stated in my testimony before the Commission, more than 5,000 veterans live in American Samoa and over 1,000 are enrolled in VA health care. Enrolled veterans are forced to travel more than 2,300 miles from American Samoa to the nearest VA facility in Honolulu, Hawaii to receive the medical care and attention they need.

As a Vietnam veteran, I am painfully aware of the sacrifices that American Samoan veterans have made in defense of this nation and I do not believe we are asking for the moon when we ask for a VA clinic to be established in American Samoa. Like every other American who has borne the battle, our veterans deserve access to quality VA care. We deserve to have one doctor, one nurse, one clinic to serve our veterans and I am pleased that the CARES Commission agrees with me and has made a favorable recommendation for the establishment of a CBOC in American Samoa.

Although there was some question about whether or not we had enough veterans to qualify for the establishment of a CBOC, the CARES Commission set aside VA claims that we may have as few as 800 veterans and simply stated that it agrees that a CBOC should be established in American Samoa in collaboration with the Department of Defense. This news comes after years of hard work, ups and downs, and twists and turns, the Congressman said. For almost two years, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has placed a hold on construction of new facilities and every State and Territory is now competing for construction dollars. Last year, about 242 VA facilities were listed in the CARES National Draft plan and American Samoas CBOC was among those listed. Initially, we had a priority rating of 3 because we have less than 7,000 veterans. Because of our remote location and lack of VA care, I asked the Commission to raise our rating from priority 3 to priority 1 before publishing its final recommendations.

I also asked for American Samoas CBOC to be included in the Commissions final report to the Secretary. Senator Inouye, Senator Akaka, the Honorable Chris Smith, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Honorable Lane Evans,

Ranking Member, supported my efforts and joined with me in signing letters to Mr. Everett Alvarez, Chairman of the CARES Commission, requesting the same.

On February 13, 2004, the Commission released its report and I am pleased that our CBOC is included in its final recommendations. I am also pleased that the Commission made a nationwide decision to dismiss the VA priority ratings of 1, 2, and 3 and thereby cleared the way for the establishment of CBOCs in rural areas like American Samoa that have less than 7,000 veterans. Given the Commission's report, I am now hopeful that the Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, will use the recommendations made by the CARES Commission to create better access to health care for American Samoans veterans.

At this time, I want to thank the CARES Commission for undertaking this mission and for seeking the views of veterans and stakeholders across the country. I also want to thank Senators Inouye and Akaka, Chairman Smith, Ranking Member Evans, and General John Ma for their support throughout this process.

As I have said many times before, our sons and daughters have served in record numbers in every U.S. military engagement from WWII to present operations in Iraq. We have stood by the United States in good times and bad and I am pleased that the CARES Commission has recognized our service and agreed that it is time to do right by American Samoans veterans.

Once again, I thank the Commission for the opportunity I had to testify and submit supporting documentation for consideration, including a Senate Concurrent Resolution from the American Samoa Legislature dated March 28, 2001 I also thank American Samoans veterans and our active duty service members for their support. I applaud them for their military service and I continue to wish them and their families the very best, the Congressman concluded.

[Press Release, June 22, 2004]

#### U.S. SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS APPROVES FALEOMAVAEGA'S REQUEST TO ESTABLISH VA CLINIC IN AMERICAN SAMOA

Congressman Faleomavaega announced today that the Honorable Anthony J. Principi, U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs, has approved Faleomavaega's request to establish a VA clinic in American Samoa.

"The Secretary announced his decision on May 7, 2004 and I will be meeting on June 24, 2004 with Dr. Wiebe, Director of VISN 21, which is the Veterans Integrated Service Network responsible for California, Nevada, Hawaii, Guam and American Samoa," Congressman Faleomavaega said.

"On April 26, 2004, I briefed Major General Joseph G. Webb, Jr., Commander of the Pacific Regional Medical Command and the Lead Agent for TRICARE Pacific on my efforts to establish a clinic in American Samoa. Dr. Wiebe was also present for these discussions which took place in American Samoa during the April recess, or district work period."

"I am pleased that I was able to take General Webb and Dr. Wiebe on a tour of the butler building which the 9th Regional Support Command has agreed to turn over for our use, Faleomavaega continued. I am also pleased that General Webb and Dr. Wiebe were able to see first-hand the needs of our local veterans."

"Most of all, I am thankful that Secretary Principi has agreed that a VA community based outpatient clinic (CBOC) should be established in American Samoa. Only 156 new CBOCs will be established and one of those will be for our veterans," Congressman Faleomavaega said.

"Recognizing that resources are not available to open all of these clinics immediately, the VA will establish the new CBOCs by using criteria within the existing approval process. This includes sound business plans and the capacity to manage specialty referrals and inpatient needs of a new population."

"Given our immediate need and the arrangements we have in place with the U.S. Army Reserve, I am hopeful that VISN 21 and Dr. Wiebe will be able to act quickly on the establishment of our clinic, the Congressman said. At this time, I want to thank the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) Commission which included American Samoa in its recommendations to the Secretary."

"The CARES Commission was created by the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide an independent assessment of what the VAs needs may be during the next 20 years. One of the main priorities of the Commission is to make sure that underserved veterans will receive the care they deserve."

"On October 1, 2003, I testified before the CARES Commission via live satellite feed from the U.S. House of Representatives to urge the establishment of a VA clinic in American Samoa and to request that our clinic be given the highest priority rating possible, Congressman Faleomavaega said. In my statement, I informed the Commission that I had worked closely with General John Ma, Commanding General of the 9th Regional Support Command, to secure a building at no cost to the VA."

"The building that we agreed should be used for a VA clinic is the butler building which currently houses our PX. The butler building is 3,600 sq. ft., equipped with telehealth lines, and there are separate entrances and parking lots that can be further separated if necessary. The U.S. Army Reserve has agreed to reconfigure the building to VA needs and transfer its operations when our new \$20 million U.S. Army Reserve Center is completed by October of this year."

"Mr. David Burge, Director of the Honolulu VA Medical and Regional Office Center (VAMROC), and Dr. Wiebe have estimated that construction costs to renovate the building will be approximately \$1 million. The VA and DoD will assume all costs associated with the renovation and, once converted, the clinic will be used to serve Army Reservists as well as our veterans," Congressman Faleomavaega said.

"As I stated in my testimony before the Commission, more than 5,000 veterans live in American Samoa but only about 800 are enrolled in VA health care. Enrolled veterans are forced to travel more than 2,300 miles from American Samoa to the nearest VA facility in Honolulu, Hawaii to receive the medical care and attention they need."

"As a Vietnam veteran, I am painfully aware of the sacrifices that American Samoans veterans have made in defense of this nation, and I do not believe we are asking for the moon when we ask for a VA clinic to be established in American Samoa. Like every other American who has borne the battle, our veterans deserve access to quality VA care. We deserve to have at least one doctor, one nurse, and a clinic to serve our veterans and I am pleased that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs and the CARES Commission agrees with me and has made a favorable recommendation for the establishment of a CBOC in American Samoa."

"Although there was some question about whether or not we had enough veterans to qualify for the establishment of a CBOC, the CARES Commission set aside VA claims that we may have as few as 800 veterans and simply stated that it agrees that a CBOC should be established in American Samoa in col-

laboration with the Department of Defense. This news comes after years of hard work, ups and downs, and twists and turns, the Congressman said. For almost two years, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs has placed a hold on construction of new facilities and every State and Territory is now competing for construction dollars."

"Last year, about 242 VA facilities were listed in the CARES National Draft plan and American Samoans CBOC was among those listed. Initially, we had a priority rating of 3 because we have less than 7,000 veterans. Because of our remote location and lack of VA care, I asked the Commission to raise our rating from priority 3 to priority 1 before publishing its final recommendations."

"I also asked for American Samoans CBOC to be included in the Commissions final report to the Secretary. Senator Inouye, Senator Akaka, the Honorable Chris Smith, Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs and the Honorable Lane Evans, Ranking Member, supported my efforts and joined with me in signing letters to Mr. Everett Alvarez, Chairman of the CARES Commission, requesting the same."

"On February 13, 2004, the Commission released its report and, as I announced in a press release dated February 14, 2004, our CBOC was included in its final recommendations. The Commission made a nationwide decision to dismiss the VA priority ratings of 1, 2, and 3 and thereby cleared the way for the establishment of CBOCs in rural areas like American Samoa that have less than 7,000 veterans."

"In turn, Secretary Principi included our clinic on his list of 156 and I am hopeful that with his support VISN 21 will now move to improve health care for American Samoans veterans, the Congressman said. As I have said time and time again, our men and women have served in record numbers in every U.S. military engagement from WWII to present operations in Iraq. We have stood by the United States in good times and bad and I am pleased that Secretary Principi has made it clear that it is time to do right by American Samoans veterans."

"I thank Secretary Principi for his support. I also thank the CARES Commission, Senator Inouye, Senator Akaka, Chairman Chris Smith and Ranking Member Lane Evans of the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Dave Burge, General Webb, and General John Ma for their support and commitment throughout this process."

"Again, I thank the Commission for the opportunity I had to testify and submit supporting documentation for consideration, including a Senate Concurrent Resolution from the American Samoa Legislature dated March 28, 2001. I also thank American Samoans veterans and our active duty service members for their support. I applaud them for their military service and I continue to wish them and their families the very best," the Congressman concluded.

#### TRIBUTE TO YOUNG STAFF MEMBERS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE OF THE 18TH CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT OF TEXAS AND THE UNITED STATES

**HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 20, 2014

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, as Members of Congress we know well, perhaps better than most, how blessed our nation is to